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1. (thrice amended) A cellulose acetate obtained by the reaction of a cellulose, which may contain a hemicellulose, with acetic anhydride in the presence of a sulfuric acid catalyst and having at least one feature selected from the group consisting of:

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- (i) said cellulose acetate has carboxyl groups wherein at least part of the carboxyl groups are free carboxyl groups;
 - (ii) said cellulose acetate contains at least one member selected from the group consisting of an acid having an acid dissociation exponent pKa of 1.93 to 4.50 in water, an alkali metal salt of said acid, and an alkaline earth metal salt of said acid to generate free carboxyl groups; and
 - (iii) said cellulose acetate contains an alkali metal or an alkaline earth metal, wherein the total content of the alkali metal and the alkaline earth metal in 1 gram of the cellulose acetate is 5.5×10^{-6} equivalent or less in terms of ion equivalent, to generate free carboxyl groups, [; and]

wherein said cellulose acetate is soluble in an organic solvent.

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2. (twice amended) A cellulose acetate according to Claim 1 having at least feature (iii), wherein the total content of the alkali metal and the alkaline earth metal in 1 gram of the cellulose acetate is 2.5×10^{-6} equivalent or less in terms of ion equivalent.

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3. (twice amended) A cellulose acetate according to Claim 2 [1], wherein the

~~Total content of the alkali metal and the alkaline earth metal in 1 gram of the cellulose acetate is 2.5×10^{-6} equivalent or less in terms of ion equivalent.~~

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4. (twice amended) A cellulose acetate according to Claim 1 having at least feature (ii), wherein the acid has a pKa value of 2.0 to 4.4.

5. (twice amended) A cellulose acetate according to Claim 1 having at least feature (ii), wherein the acid is at least one organic acid selected from the group consisting of an aliphatic monocarboxylic acid, an aliphatic polycarboxylic acid, a hydroxycarboxylic acid, and an amino acid.

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6. (twice amended) A cellulose acetate according to Claim 5 [1], wherein the acid is at least one organic acid selected from the group consisting of a saturated or unsaturated C₁₋₃ monocarboxylic acid, a saturated or unsaturated C₂₋₄ dicarboxylic acid, a C₁₋₆ hydroxycarboxylic acid, and an amino acid.

7. (twice amended) A cellulose acetate according to Claim 6 [1], wherein the acid is at least one member selected from the group consisting of formic acid, haloacetic acid, halopropionic acid, acrylic acid, malonic acid, succinic acid, glutaric acid, fumaric acid, glycolic acid, lactic acid, malic acid, tartaric acid, and citric acid.

8. (twice amended) A cellulose acetate according to Claim 1 having at least

~~feature (ii), wherein the total content of the acid, the alkali metal salt of the acid, and the alkaline earth metal salt of the acid is 1×10^{-9} [10^{-3}] to 3×10^{-5} mole relative to 1 gram of the cellulose acetate.~~

9. (twice amended) A cellulose acetate according to Claim 8 [1], wherein the total content of the acid, the alkali metal salt of the acid, and the alkaline earth metal salt of the acid is 1×10^{-8} to 2×10^{-5} mole relative to 1 gram of the cellulose acetate.

10. (twice amended) A cellulose acetate according to Claim 9 [1], wherein the total content of the acid, the alkali metal salt of the acid, and the alkaline earth metal salt of the acid is 1×10^{-7} to 1×10^{-5} mole relative to 1 gram of the cellulose acetate.

11. A cellulose acetate according to Claim 1, wherein the cellulose acetate is in the form of a slurry, and wherein the slurry has a pH of 4.5 to 5.5.

12. (twice amended) A cellulose acetate according to Claim 11 [1], wherein the cellulose acetate is in the form of a slurry[, and wherein the slurry has] having a pH of 4.8 to 6.0.

13. A cellulose acetate according to Claim 1, wherein the average degree of acetylation is from 43.7 to 62.5 / .

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15. ^{+twice} (amended) A cellulose acetate according to Claim 1, wherein the cellulose as a raw material is at least one member selected from the group consisting of a wood pulp and a linter pulp.

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~~16. (twice amended) A cellulose acetate according to Claim 15 [1], wherein the cellulose as a raw material is at least one member selected from the group consisting of a hardwood pulp and a softwood pulp.~~

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~~17. (twice amended) A method of producing a cellulose acetate claimed in Claim 1, which comprises:~~

- ~~(i) mixing a cellulose acetate and an acid having an acid dissociation exponent pKa of 1.93 to 4.50 in water or the metal salt thereof;~~
- ~~(ii) treating a cellulose acetate with said acid or said metal salt thereof; or~~
- ~~(iii) adding an alkali metal salt of said acid or an alkaline earth metal salt of said acid to a cellulose acetate such that the total content of said alkali metal and said alkaline earth metal in 1 gram of the cellulose acetate is 5.5×10^{-6} equivalent or less in terms [term] of ion equivalent.~~

18. A dope containing the cellulose acetate according to Claim 1.

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~~19. (twice amended) A dope containing (a) a cellulose acetate and (b) at least one member selected from the group consisting of an acid having an acid dissociation~~

exponent pKa of 1.93 to 4.50 in water, an alkali metal salt of the acid, and an alkaline earth metal salt of the acid.

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20. (amended) A method for improving the releasability of a film from a support which comprises casting the dope [according to] of Claim 18 or 19 on the support.

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21. (amended) A method for improving spinnability which comprises spinning the dope [according to] of Claim 18 or 19.

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22. A method of producing a cellulose acetate according to Claim 17, which comprises treating a cellulose with acetic acid, acetylating with acetic anhydride in the presence of a sulfuric acid catalyst to produce a cellulose triacetate, and hydrolyzing or aging the cellulose triacetate using sulfuric acid as a catalyst.

REMARKS

This is in response to the Office Action that was mailed on June 21, 2000. The amendment to the specification is supported by Comparative Example 3 on page 34, lines 5-21, and Comparative Example 5 on page 34, line 23 through page 25, line 15. It has the effect of reversing a previous amendment and reverting to the original disclosure. In Comparative Example 3, since a thermal stabilizer (calcium acetate and magnesium acetate) was not added (page 34, lines 14-15), heat resistance of Comparative Example 3 showed the level "x". In